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## The Historic Merger of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (IBVM) And the Congregation of Jesus (CJ)

**TWO HISTORIES, ONE MAGNIFICAT. A CELEBRATION OF UNION IN MISSION AND SPIRIT**

**Loreto and Congregatio Jesu Unite, Strengthening Global Commitment to Faith, Justice, and Education**



**By Sr. Powlin**

**A Brief History of the Congregatio Jesu (CJ) and Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (IBVM)**

The Congregatio Jesu was founded by Mary Ward. She was joined by some companions at the end of 1609 and opened her first convent at Saint-Omer in 1610. Following a strong interior desire, she chose the Constitutions of St. Ignatius as the way of life of her Institute. Members of her congregation would serve the Church as apostolic women in the defence and propagation of the faith.

Although the Institute and its schools flouri-

shed, Mary Ward was unable to obtain Papal approval for reasons bound up with contemporary circumstances.

The institute was suppressed in 1631 by Pope Urban VIII in the Bull Pastoralis Romani Pontificis.

The foundress submitted with entire obedience to what the Pope ordered. She never gave up hope that God would enable her Institute to revive for the service of the Church.

From 1680 onwards, thanks to the dedication of loyal companions, episcopal permission was granted for the founding of new houses. From 1749 the common Superior was known as the General Superior.

Contd. on P12

### Statement by Sr Monica Suchiang, CJ, formerly an IBVM (Loreto) sister and now Provincial of the South Asia Province

"We rejoice to announce that Mary Ward's Institute, the Sisters of the IBVM and the Sisters of the Congregation of Jesus, now stand united as one, in fulfilment of our foundress Mary Ward's long-cherished desire. We celebrate this historic day with deep gratitude; to serve God as one body is both our joy and our privilege. This union is more than an administrative step; it is a spiritual milestone, a sign of fidelity to the Spirit, who calls us to unity for the sake of mission. By becoming one, we affirm that our shared charism transcends any separation, and that our service to God's people will bear richer fruit in communion. With humility, hope, and courage, we move forward, ready to be instruments of peace, justice, and freedom in today's world.

May this new beginning deepen our willingness to do God's will and strengthen us to carry Mary Ward's vision into the future — bringing Christ's truth, compassion, and justice to places where hope is most needed."

### Congregatio Jesu and IBVM merge into one congregation Rome, 4 November 2025.

Following prayer, reflection and engagement of members, the two congregations of apostolic women religious, Congregatio Jesu (CJ) and the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (IBVM- Loreto) are merging today.

The merged Congregatio Jesu, approximately 1,800 sisters worldwide, will continue to honour the legacy and charism of its foundress Venerable Mary Ward. The merger of the two congregations will become a canonical and legal reality at 12:00 PM CET (Rome time) on 4 November 2025. The merger decree will be publicly proclaimed at a special Mass in Loyola, Spain, which will be presided over by the General Superior of the Jesuits, Fr. Arturo Sosa SJ. "We are very happy that we can finally fulfil Mary Ward's dream of a united congregation of women religious with the same constitutions as those of the Society of Jesus", states Sr Veronica Fuhrmann CJ, General Superior of Congregatio Jesu. "Throughout history, but especially during the last years, we have journeyed in close connection.

We share the same charism, the same values and the same understanding of mission. Union of minds and hearts, which Saint Ignatius has so aptly described and held in the highest esteem, is the bond that deeply connects us. Seeing this union now realized not only in sisterly and spiritual but also in canonical and legal terms fills us all with great joy and deep gratitude." "In a fractured world, our members have freely chosen to become one congregation as a witness to Christ's gospel message of peace and harmony. We have listened to the prompting of the Spirit and embark on this journey with renewed missionary zeal", says Sr Carmel Swords CJ, former Institute leader of the IBVM. "We believe that together we are stronger. We move forward filled with gratitude and a desire to serve God's people in freedom and joy."



## Church in India

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E-mail:

clheraldadvertisement@gmail.com

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— Editor

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All material may be edited for the sake of space, clarity or editorial policy. Features, articles should not exceed 600 words, while reports should be within 300 words.

All submission should be made through email. Reports should accompany appropriate photographs. Deadline to submit articles is Sunday, for reports Monday evening, and for advertisements Tuesday 12 noon.

- Editor

## Kolkata launches 'dignity burial' initiative for the marginalized



**Kolkata:** In a gesture of compassion and inclusion, the Christian Burial Board Kolkata inaugurated its “Dignity Burial / Shamman Samadhi” initiative at the historic 184 Lower Circular Road Cemetery on 31 October 2025.

The programme ensures that every individual—regardless of financial status—receives a dignified burial, free of cost.

The initiative designates a dedicated section within the cemetery for families unable to afford burial expenses, guided by the Board's solemn commitment: “Dignity in Every Farewell.”

The inauguration ceremony was graced by Member of Parliament Sudip Bandopadhyay as Chief Guest, alongside Fr Moloy D'Costa, Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Calcutta, and MP Derek O'Brien. In a symbolic act of compassion, two sisters from Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity cut the ceremonial ribbon, underscoring the spirit of service that animates the project.

Shri Bandopadhyay announced a ₹20 lakh contribution from his MP Local Area Development Fund to support the cemetery's development, affirming the government's solidarity with the initiative.

Denise Smith of the Christian Burial Board shared that the programme will especially benefit those who spend their final days in the care of Missionaries of Charity homes. “This initiative will extend our mission of compassion—ensuring that they are laid to rest with dignity, peace, and respect,” she said.

A second Dignity Burial site is slated to open early next year at Tollygunge Cemetery, expanding the reach of this humane intervention.

With this initiative, the Christian Burial Board reaffirms its commitment to serve the city's most vulnerable with empathy, reverence, and civic responsibility.

MattersIndia

## Minorities decry Indian state's 'polarizing' move against polygamy

By Bijay Kumar Minj

Assam's chief minister announces enactment of a new law, which critics see as targeting Muslims ahead of elections.

A move to enact a new law against polygamy in a northeastern state of India has been criticized by Muslim and Christian activists as an attempt to polarize the electorate ahead of state elections next year. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced that a bill will be introduced on Nov. 25, the first day of the winter session of the state legislative assembly.

“If a man marries another woman without legally divorcing his wife, then there will be provision of imprisonment for seven or more years irrespective of the man's religion,” Sarma announced during a function in the state on Oct. 27. The chief minister said his government will not allow polygamy and “will protect the dignity of women, the dignity of girls till the end in Assam.”

“Your religion may give you permission for polygamy, but our government will not allow a second or third marriage,” he added. The BJP and its associate right-wing Hindu groups often accuse Muslims of having multiple wives. Though polygamy is outlawed in India, Muslim men are legally permitted to have up to four wives under the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act of 1937, which governs their family relations.

However, the findings from the National Family Health Survey in 2019-20 suggest that polygamy exists among several religious groups in the country. Among Hindus, the data reveals that 1.3 percent engage in polygamy, as against 1.9 percent of Muslims and 1.6 percent among other religious communities. The highest prevalence of polygamy was among tribal people, many of them Christians, although the trend is declining, as per official reports.



## Indian court bails US citizen, two others accused of conversion

By Michael Gonsalves

**Court says no 'fruitful purpose will be served' by keeping the accused in jail.**

A district court in western India has granted bail to a U.S. citizen and two Indian Christians arrested on charges of attempting to convert Hindu villagers during a prayer meeting in Maharashtra state.

James Leonard Watson, 58, from the United States, and local residents Ganpati Sarpe, 42, and Manoj Govind Kolha, 35, were released from Kalyan prison in Thane district on Oct. 30, nearly a month after their arrest on Oct. 3.

Their lawyer, Amol Shinde, said the court granted bail after he argued that the men were detained on “trumped-up charges of conversion.”

In his Oct. 29 order, Judge N. L. Kale of the Bhiwandi District and Sessions Court said most of the investigation had been completed and that the alleged offense did not carry a life sentence or the death penalty.

“No fruitful purpose will be served by keeping the applicant behind bars,” the court observed, calling it “a fit case to exercise discretion and release the applicant on bail under conditions.”

The accused have been directed to report to the local police station every Wednesday before noon for one month, or until the police file formal charges in court, whichever comes first. The court also barred Watson from leaving India without permission until his visa expires or the case concludes.

“The bail order is a great relief for us,” said local Protestant pastor Mahesh Bhivadi of the Light of the World Ministry, who described the decision as a boost to Christians' confidence to hold prayer meetings “without fear.”

Police arrested the trio after a Hindu villager Ravinath Bhurkut complained to police that they tried to convert about 35 Hindus to Christianity during a prayer meeting in Bhuishet village, Thane district.

The complaint accused them of attempting to hurt religious sentiments and violating provisions of Maharashtra's anti-black magic law by allegedly promising miracle cures and prosperity through conversion.

Watson was also accused of saying Hinduism was based on superstition and that converting to Christianity would bring happiness and success.

Christian leaders say such accusations are often used by Hindu nationalist groups linked to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to harass Christians, part of efforts to promote a Hindu-first vision of India.

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## Church in the World

### Sudan: Maternity hospital attacked, hundreds dead



By Daniel Esparza

Though overwhelmed, local humanitarian workers remain. Pope Leo is urging the international community to intervene "decisively and generously."

In late October 2025, the city of El Fasher in Darfur, Sudan, became a flashpoint of catastrophe — both a humanitarian and moral one. It is estimated that more than 36,000 people fled on foot in recent days to the nearby town of Tawila, itself already sheltering over 650,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Particularly devastating, according to the World Health Organization: More than 460 patients and their companions were reportedly shot and killed at the Saudi Maternity Hospital in El Fasher, as the city fell. Six health workers were abducted. Pope Leo spoke of the tragedy on November 2 after praying the midday Angelus: It is with great sorrow that I follow the tragic news coming from Sudan, particularly from the city of El Fasher in the tormented northern Darfur region. Indiscriminate violence against women and children, attacks on defenseless civilians, and serious obstacles to humanitarian action are causing unacceptable suffering to a population already exhausted by long months of conflict.

Let us pray that the Lord will welcome the deceased, sustain the suffering, and touch the hearts of those responsible. I renew my heartfelt appeal to the parties involved for a ceasefire and the urgent opening of humanitarian corridors. Finally, I invite the international community to intervene decisively and generously, to offer assistance and support to those who are working to bring relief.

#### The scale of the atrocity

International agencies have collected harrowing reports of mass killings, sexual violence, abductions and targeted looting after the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) captured the city following more than 500 days under siege. The UN human-rights office (OHCHR) confirmed "horrendous accounts of summary executions, mass killings, rapes, attacks against humanitarian workers, looting, abductions and forced displacement."

**A humanitarian collapse**  
El Fasher's collapse must be understood as both violence and siege. Prior to the takeover, the city had endured a protracted blockade: more than 1,100 violations were verified, over 1,000 children had been killed or maimed, and essential services had collapsed.

### Never too late: Man returns stolen skull to cathedral after 60 years

By Christine Rousselle

A German tourist returned a skull he stole from St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna about 60 years after he stole it during a tour of the catacombs.

A bit of odd news out of Austria, where a man from Germany returned a skull he stole from the catacombs of St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna about six decades after he stole it while touring the church's catacombs.

The skull was returned to the cathedral in a package sent to Franz Zehetner, the cathedral's archivist. He told local and international news outlets that "there was suddenly a large, tied-up parcel on my desk with no specific sender."

When he opened it, he found a skull — and a letter explaining the circumstances about why the man was returning it.

In the letter, the penitent thief explained that he had taken the skull "as a young tourist on a guided tour of the catacombs" about 60 years ago, and that he wanted to

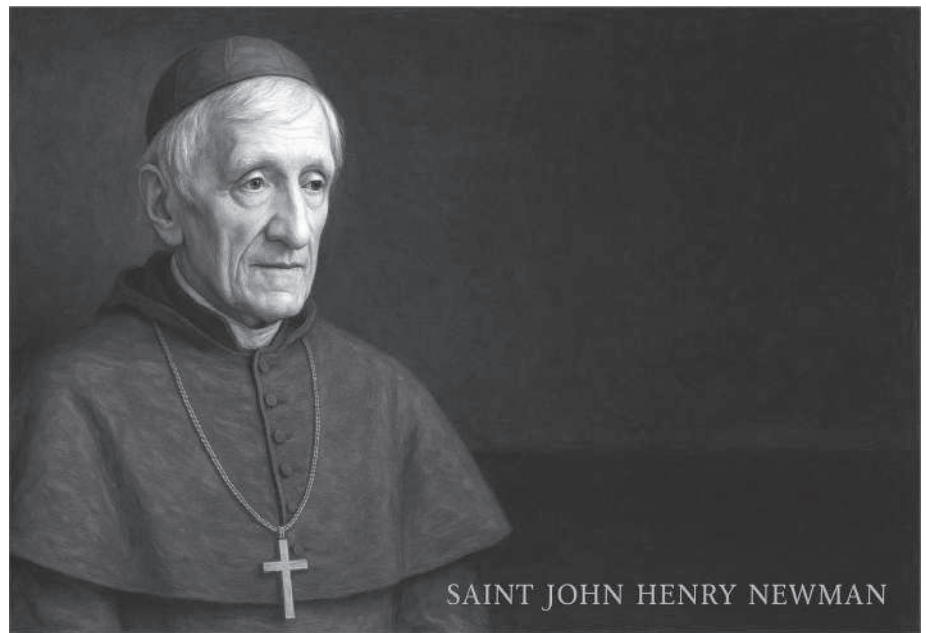
return it and clear his conscience before he died. "Now, at the end of my life, I want to come to terms with myself," wrote the sender, who was identified only as a man from northern Germany.

Zehetner said he was "touched and moved at the same time" by the long-delayed act of repentance.

"Also that he had carefully preserved the skull over the years — even it was not according to the rules — instead of carelessly getting rid of it," said Zehetner. The skull has now been re-interred to the catacombs. Given its age, it is impossible to know the identity of the deceased. There are about 11,000 people who are buried in the catacombs of St. Stephen's Cathedral.

"The thief has not only made amends for his youthful exuberance, but has done a work of respect for the dead," he said.

Let this bizarre and somewhat spooky story be a reminder that it is truly never too late to right a wrong and to seek forgiveness for a misdeed!



### Pope Leo XIV declares St. John Henry Newman a doctor of the Church

By Walter Sánchez Silva

Pope Leo XIV has declared St. John Henry Newman a doctor of the Church, recognizing the English cardinal and theologian — one of the most influential converts from Anglicanism — as a towering figure of faith and intellect in modern Catholicism.

The declaration took place at the beginning of Mass for the solemnity of All Saints on Nov. 1, celebrated in St. Peter's Basilica as part of the Jubilee of Education. Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, prefect of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, read Newman's biography and formally requested that the pope proclaim the saint a doctor of the Church.

Pope Leo then read in Latin the solemn formula declaring Newman the 38th doctor of the universal Church. The pope also named Newman co-patron of Catholic education, putting him alongside St. Thomas Aquinas in that role.

#### 'An inspiration to new generations'

"Newman's impressive spiritual and cultural stature will surely serve as an inspiration to new generations whose hearts thirst for the infinite and who, through research and knowledge, are willing to undertake that journey which, as the ancients said, takes us 'per aspera ad astra,' through difficulties to the stars," the pope said in his homily.

Finally, he recalled Pope Benedict XVI's words to young people: "'What God wants most of all for each one of you is that you should become holy. He loves you much more than you could ever begin to imagine.' This is the universal call to holiness that the Second Vatican Council made an essential part of its message. And holiness is intended for everyone, without exception, as a personal and communal journey marked out by the beatitudes."

"I pray that Catholic education will help each person to discover their own call to holiness," the pope said.

#### What is a doctor of the Church?

The title "doctor of the Church" is given to saints recognized for their eminent learn-

ing, deep holiness, and significant contribution to Catholic theology.

To receive the title, a saint must have demonstrated outstanding sanctity confirmed by canonization, excellence in doctrine through writings of lasting influence, and a formal declaration by the pope.

The most recent doctor of the Church before Newman was St. Irenaeus of Lyon, proclaimed by Pope Francis in 2022 as the "Doctor of Unity."

Other doctors of the Church include St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Teresa of Ávila, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Thérèse of Lisieux, St. Anthony of Padua, and St. Francis de Sales.

#### Who is St. John Henry Newman?

St. John Henry Newman was born in London on Feb. 21, 1801. Originally an Anglican priest, he became one of the leading figures of the Oxford Movement, which sought to return the Church of England to its ancient roots. His theological reflections led him ever closer to Catholicism, and in 1845 he entered the Catholic Church.

In remarks after Saturday's Mass, Pope Leo welcomed an official delegation of the Church of England, led by Archbishop Stephen Cottrell of York, and prayed that Newman might "accompany Christians on their journey towards full union."

Ordained a Catholic priest in 1847, Newman founded the Oratory of St. Philip Neri in England and went on to produce an immense body of work — more than 40 books and some 20,000 letters — spanning theology, philosophy, and education.

Pope Leo XIII made him a cardinal in 1879. Newman chose as his motto "Cor ad cor loquitur" ("Heart speaks to heart"), reflecting his conviction that true conversion is a return to the innermost dwelling of God in the heart.

He died in Edgbaston, England, in 1890. Pope Benedict XVI beatified him in 2010, and Pope Francis canonized him in 2019. His remains rest in the Catholic cemetery of Rednal, Birmingham.

# The Herald

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## There is no place for elitism in the Catholic Church

In his recent Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi te* ("I have loved you") signed on 4 October 2025 and published a few days later, Pope Leo XIV sets forth a vigorous and deeply pastoral vision of the Church's mission. Woven throughout his text is a powerful insistence: there is no place for elitism in the Catholic Church. Pope Leo's exhortation challenges elitist structures, invites conversion of heart, and envisions a Church of solidarity, humble service and true communion.

From the outset, Pope Leo emphasises that the Church is called to be "a Church for the poor" not as some optional ministry, but as constitutive of her identity. Elitism, an attitude of superiority, exclusion or privilege runs contrary to the Gospel witness and to the model of Christ who "became poor so that by his poverty you might become rich." When the Church allows itself to be captured by elite norms, whether financial, social, cultural or clerical, it risks distancing itself from the reality of Christ among the "least."

Pope Leo reminds us that poverty takes many forms: material destitution, social marginalisation, lack of voice and rights, cultural or spiritual impoverishment. An elitist mentality responds to poverty only as a charitable after-thought, or uses it to burnish its moral credentials rather than seeing the poor as full and equal members of the Body of Christ. In this sense elitism isn't just a sociological issue, but a spiritual obstacle.

One of the central themes of *Dilexi te* is the so-called "preferential option for the poor". Pope Leo writes that this preference "never indicates exclusivity or discrimination towards other groups" but instead emphasises God's compassion for the weak and marginalised. In other words: the Church adopts a style of solidarity whereby no one is excluded, and no one is privileged out of proportion.

Elitism, by contrast, elevates some within the community by virtue of wealth, education, power, network and relegates others. But Pope Leo warns that a truly Christian community looks in the poor and marginalised and recognises Christ himself knocking at the door. He insists: "no Christian can regard the poor simply as a societal problem; they are part of our family, they are 'one of us'." This challenges any clerical or lay "inner circle" mentality and calls all members to embrace equal dignity in communion.

Elitism often breeds self-satisfaction, invisibility to one's own advantages, and complacency. Pope Leo draws attention to the deeper roots of poverty and exclusion: economic systems that enrich a few, subtle cultural forms of marginalisation, and a "throwaway culture" that tolerates millions of lives lived in indignity. These systemic realities are not beyond the scope of the Church: they demand a "change in mentality" and a conversion of heart.

A Church that allows elitism sets up invisible barriers: between clergy and laity, between educated and uneducated, between those who "have access" and those who don't. Pope Leo insists that service of the poor, care for the sick, accompaniment of the migrant and excluded, are not optional extras but fundamental signs of authenticity. If the Church fails in this dimension, she risks betraying her mandate to incarnate the love of Christ. Elitism, especially when unrecognised, becomes a subtle idol of status, of comfort, of influence.

For the local church in India and indeed in communities everywhere, Pope Leo's exhortation is a clarion call. It invites priests, religious, lay-leaders and volunteers to examine whether their ministry is shaped by service and humility or by power and exclusivity. Are parish councils and diocesan bodies open to voices from the margins? Do we welcome the migrant, the Dalit, the excluded, the person without education as peers in the Body of Christ? Are our liturgies, our catechesis, our governance, inclusive, open, transparent?

In *Dilexi te*, Pope Leo XIV reminds us that the love of God for humanity, especially the poor and marginalised, is the foundation of the Church's mission. That love rejects elitism because it refuses hierarchy of dignity. Where elitism erects barriers, the Gospel builds bridges. Where elitism promotes comfort and exclusion, the Gospel calls for solidarity and inclusion.

The Catholic Church, at its best, is not a club for the socially or economically privileged, it is a community of sinners redeemed by mercy, called to walk together, to uplift the lowly, to recognise Christ in every face. To echo Pope Leo: when the Church bends down to care for the poor, she assumes her highest posture. In that posture there is no room for elitism, only service, humility and the joy of the Gospel.

### Letters to the Editor

Sir, This refers to my article on Special Intensive Revision (SIR) on page 8 of the Herald dated 31 October – 06 November 2025. In column 2 paragraph 2 it was written the Supreme Court urged the Election Commission to accept Aadhaar and EPIC as valid identity documents. The correct version is: The Supreme Court directed the Election Commission of India (ECI) to treat Aadhaar as the 12th identity document.

The Supreme Court Bench of Justices Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi during its hearing of the case on Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar, categorically stated that the ECI must treat Aadhaar as 12th document. The apex court's reasoning

was Aadhaar is one of the documents for establishing one's identity as per Section 23(4) of the RoPA (Representation of the People Act). In fact, Justice Kant instructed Senior Advocate Rakesh Dwivedi who appeared for the ECI, "You can put it on your website, Mr. Dwivedi, so that voters and officials are clear." Source of information Supreme Court Observer dated 08.09.2025. The link is:

<https://www.scoobserver.in/reports/revision-of-electoral-rolls-in-bihar-day-8-sc-directs-the-inclusion-of-aadhaar-as-document-under-the-sir-exercise/>  
Thank you,

Isaac Harold Gomes

### Apostolic Exhortation, "Dilexi te"

I fully agree to Pope Leo XIV who in his first Apostolic Exhortation, "Dilexi te" says as a call to Christ's disciples to recognise him in the poor and the suffering". There are many people around us suffering due to pain and loneliness and poverty have driven them to take up to different sorts of negative vices including crime. There are many people who are searching for just way of living and are in search of employment. There are many people suffering due to broken relationships and this have led them to different types of vices. There is a need for

every human person to help people suffering due to loneliness and brokenness and are searching for a just way of living. Pope Leo XIV first Apostolic Exhortation echos the right path which is incarnated for the poor, caring for the sick, opposing slavery, defending women who experience exclusion and violence. We need to express ourselves and reach out to people who are suffering from broken relationships, loneliness and suffering and who are waiting to be reunited to their loved ones.

Cajetan Peter D'Souza

## Is purgatory a place or process?

By Philip Kosloski

St. John Paul II clarified that purgatory is not a physical place, but a process of purification.

When imagining the afterlife, it can be tempting to think of purgatory as a specific "place" or "location," where all the souls are sent before entering into Heaven.

However, the Catholic Church teaches that purgatory is not a "place," but more of a "process."

St. John Paul II gave a catechesis on purgatory during a general audience in 1999, explaining what the Church teaches regarding purgatory.

Purification must be complete, and indeed this is precisely what is meant by the Church's teaching on purgatory. The term does not indicate a place, but a condition of existence. Those who, after death, exist in a state of purification, are already in the love of Christ who removes from them the remnants of imperfection.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church is also careful not to label purgatory as a "place," but speaks only in terms of the process. All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.

The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect.

Purgatory, while it may seem like a place where souls go to, is much more complex, though we will never know fully what it is like until we experience it ourselves.

### Who goes to purgatory?

Purgatory is not meant for everyone who



dies, but only those souls that need further purification and preparation for Heaven.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church gives the following definition:

All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.

Essentially this state is reserved to people who want to enter the gates of Heaven, but who still had some attachment to earthly things.

Some have used the following example. At baptism we are given a white garment and at our death, we are to present to God that same white garment unstained. However, if that garment still has a few stains on it, it needs to be purified. In this example purgatory is seen more like a laundry, where you go to purify that white garment.

Souls that are able to present that white garment without any spot or wrinkle are able to enter Heaven immediately.

On the other hand, souls that do not want to be in the presence of God and who freely reject him are not allowed to enter purgatory and freely choose to enter Hell.

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Liturgy

MY FAVOURITE SAINT Saint of the Day for November 12

Saint Josaphat's Story  
©. 1580 – November 12, 1623)



In 1595, the Orthodox bishop of Brest-Litovsk in present-day Belarus and five other bishops representing millions of Ruthenians, sought reunion with Rome. John Kunsevich—who took the name Josaphat in religious life—was to dedicate his life, and die for the same cause. Born in what is now Ukraine, he went to work in Wilno and was influenced by clergy adhering to the 1596 Union of Brest. He became a Basilian monk, then a priest, and soon was well known as a preacher and an ascetic.

At a relatively young age, upon becoming both bishop of Vitebsk and archbishop of Polotsk, Saint Josaphat faced a difficult situation. Most monks, fearing interference in liturgy and customs, did not want union with Rome. By synods, catechetical instruction, reform of the clergy, and personal example, however, Josaphat was successful in winning the greater part of the Orthodox in that area to the union.

But the next year a dissident hierarchy was set up, and his opposite number spread the accusation that Saint Josaphat had “gone Latin” and that all his people would have to do the same. He was not enthusiastically supported by the Latin bishops of Poland.

Despite warnings, he went to Vitebsk, still a hotbed of trouble. Attempts were made to foment trouble and drive him from the diocese: A priest was sent to shout insults to him from his own courtyard. When Josaphat had him removed and shut up in his house, the opposition rang the town hall bell, and a mob assembled. The priest was released, but members of the mob broke into the bishop's home. Saint Josaphat was struck with a halberd, then shot, and his body thrown into the river. It was later recovered and is now buried in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. He was the first saint of the Eastern Church to be canonized by Rome.

Saint Josaphat's death brought a movement toward Catholicism and unity, but the controversy continued, and the dissidents, too, had their martyr. After the partition of Poland, the Russians forced most Ruthenians to join the Russian Orthodox Church. In 1964, newspaper photos of Pope Paul VI embracing

Athenagoras I, the Orthodox patriarch of Constantinople, marked a significant step toward the healing of a division in Christendom that has spanned more than nine centuries.

The seeds of separation were sown in the fourth century when the Roman Empire was divided into East and West. The actual split came over customs such as using unleavened bread, Saturday fasting, and celibacy. No doubt the political involvement of religious leaders on both sides was a large factor, and doctrinal disagreement was present. But no reason was enough to justify the present tragic division in Christendom, which is 64 percent Roman Catholic, 13 percent Eastern—mostly Orthodox—Churches, and 23 percent Protestant, and this when the 71 percent of the world that is not Christian should be experiencing unity and Christ-like charity from Christians!

**Prayer to Jesus for the Souls in Purgatory**

**"My Jesus, by the sorrows Thou didst suffer in Thine agony in the Garden, in Thy scourging and crowning with thorns, on the way to Calvary, in Thy crucifixion and death, have mercy on the souls in purgatory, and especially on those that are most forsaken; do Thou deliver them from the terrible torments they endure; call them and admit them to Thy most sweet embrace in paradise. Amen."**



Dedication of Lateran Basilica [C] 9 November 2025  
(Ez:47;1-2, 8-9, 12; PS 46; 1Cor 3:9c-11,16-17; Jn 2:13-22 )

**Historical note:** Today the Church celebrates the anniversary of the dedication of the Cathedral Church of Rome by Pope Sylvester I (AD 314-335), in AD 324. This Church serves as the Episcopal seat of the Pope as the Bishop of Rome and, hence, is called “the Mother and Head of all Churches of Rome and the world.” The Basilica and Baptistry were built originally by the Emperor Constantine and called Basilica Constantina. Later, the Church was named the Arch-Basilica of the Most Holy Savior. However, it is now called St. Johns Lateran Basilica because it was built on property donated to the Church by the Laterani family, and because the monks from the monastery of St. John the Baptist and St. John the Divine served in it. The name St. Johns comes, first, from the Baptistry, rebuilt (after its hard treatment by the Visigoths, AD 410), by Pope St. Sixtus II (AD 432-440), and dedicated by him to St. John the Baptist. Later, Pope St. Hilary (AD 461-468), dedicated it to St. John the Evangelist, in thanksgiving to that apostle for saving his life.

**The First Reading** (Ez:47;1-2, 8-9, 12) explained: Catholic commentary views the river flowing from Ezekiel's new temple as a powerful symbol of God's life-giving grace, healing, and the new covenant in Jesus Christ. The water, which becomes life-giving wherever it flows, transforms the Dead Sea into a freshwater source, symbolizing how the Holy Spirit and the Church bring life to a world in spiritual death. The trees with leaves for healing and fruit for food represent the life, abundance, and spiritual nourishment provided by God's grace through the new Temple, which is the body of Christ.

**The Second reading** (1 Cor 3:9c-11,16-17) explained: Catholic commentary on 1 Corinthians 3:9c-11, 16-17 emphasizes that Jesus Christ is the sole foundation of the Church, built upon by apostles and other ministers who must be careful in their work. The passage also highlights that the Church community, and each individual believer, is the living temple of God, where the Holy Spirit dwells, and must be protected from destruction by false teaching or immoral conduct.

God's building and Jesus as the foundation (vv.9c-11)  
Paul presents himself and other ministers as “co-workers in God's service” who cultivate God's “field” (the community) and build on His “building” (the Church).

**Today's Gospel gives us** the dramatic account of Jesus' cleansing of the Temple in Jerusalem. He drove out its merchants and moneychangers with moral indignation at the unjust commercialization of a House of Prayer and the exploitation of the poor pilgrims in the name of religion. The merchants charged exorbitant prices for animals for sacrifices, and the moneychangers charged unjust commissions for the required exchange of pagan coins for Temple coins. The Temple Jesus cleansed was the Temple in Jerusalem. Originally built by Solomon in 966 BC and rebuilt by Zerubbabel in 515 BC after the Babylonians had destroyed it, the Temple was renovated for the last time by King Herod the Great, a project he started in 20 BC. The abuses which infuriated Jesus were 1) the conversion of a place of prayer to a noisy marketplace and 2) the unjust business practices of animal merchants and moneychangers, encouraged by the Temple authorities. Hence, Jesus made a whip of cords and drove away the animals and the moneychangers, quoting Zechariah the prophet, “Stop making my Father's house a marketplace” (Zechariah 14:21).

**Zealous for God's house:** Jesus' actions are driven by “zeal for your house,” as quoted from Psalm 69:9, showing his righteous anger against the corruption within the Temple. The merchants and money changers were exploiting worshippers, turning God's house into a “marketplace” and taking advantage of the poor with high prices. This act is a powerful metaphor for today, calling for the removal of commercialism and distractions from worship and spiritual life.

**The new temple of Christ's body:** Jesus' response to the Jews demanding a sign is the prophecy, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up”. The Jews misunderstand, thinking of the physical Temple that took 46 years to build. However, Jesus is speaking of the “temple of his Body,” referring to his death and resurrection. This clarifies that the true dwelling place of God is not a physical building, but Jesus himself, and by extension, the Church, which is his living body on earth.

– Fr. Anthony Kadavil

# Archdiocese

## MORNING STAR INSTITUTE OF THEOLOGY CONVOCATION 2025



By Dr. Mary DCruz

Eager, smiling and dignified sat 33 students of Theology in joyful expectation, having completed 4 years of Theology and integral formation. A formation that embraces the spiritual, intellectual, pastoral and human dimension of priestly and religious life. The young priests are from 10 dioceses and 7 religious congregations.

The performance was exceptional 8 secured Distinctions, 15 obtained high first class and 10 were first class. 1st Rank Dn. A Silva Prakash, 2nd Rank Dn. Jayanta Tudu and 3rd Rank Suriya Anthony.

The solemn convocation ceremony of the 4th year theology students took place on 31st October 2025 at Morning Star Institute of Theology.

The distinguished guests included the Chief Guest His Excellency Rt Revd Shyamol Bose, Bishop of Baruipur, Guest of Honor, Revd Tomson Aerathedatha MSFS. Prof Dr D John Romus who was warmly welcomed by the hosts Revd Dr George Panthamackel MSFS Rector of MSRS and Revd Dr K Henry Jose, Director of Theology.

The Chief Guest His Excellency Rt Rev Shyamol Bose, Bishop of Baruipur and Chairman of the Governing Board of Morning Star Regional Seminary was welcomed by Rector Revd George. Bishop Shyamol with his humble and cheerful nature has endeared himself to all. His erudite scholarship, wisdom and deep spiritual insight help in guiding and promoting theological and philosophical excellence.

The Guest of Honor Revd Dr Tomson Aerathedathu MSFS, Scripture Professor and Provincial of MSFS Dibrugarh Province and Major Superior of MSFS Community of MSRS was welcomed by Revd Dr James Pattarakalayil MSFS, the Director of Philosophy Institute.

Prof Dr D John Romus an eminent theologian and former Dean of Theology at Morning Star College who served the institute for three decades was welcomed by Prof T J Thomas SJ.

The welcome address was given by Revd Dr Henry Jose, Director of Theology and he warmly welcomed all the distinguish-

shed dignitaries, students, faculty and the graduating class of 2025.

Addressing the students who will move to ordination and pastoral ministry, he reminded them that they carry the values, discipline and the spirit of the institution. Let the seminary Motto "Let your Light Shine" be your guiding force. The Chief Guest and the Guest of Honour exhorted the graduating seminarians to be good shepherds as they enter the diocese and religious congregations.

**Three Books were released on 31st October:**

**1. Religion for Human Wellbeing:**

Festschrift in honour of Prof. Dr. D. John Romus edited by Dr Henry Jose Kodikutthiyil MSFS

**2. Coming and Going of Tadekam:**

An Introduction to Metaphysics from Indian Perspectives written by Dr George for MSFS.

**3. Becoming Children of God**

written by Sr Johncy SMI.

**1) Book of Prof Dr John Romus**

Introduced by Rev Fr Peter Lingdamo

Edited by Rev Dr Henry Jose, MSFS

Released by Rt Rev Shyamol Bose.

First copy to Fr John Romus.

**2) Book of Rev Dr George Panthamackel, MSFS**

Introduced by Rev Fr Peter Lingdamo

Released by Rev Dr Tomson, MSFS

First copy to Rt Rev Shyamol Bose

**3) Book of Rev Sr Johncy, SMI**

Introduced by Rev Fr Peter Lingdamo

Released by Rev Dr George

Panthamackel, MSFS

First copy to Rev Dr Henry Jose, MSFS

**4) Newsletter**

Introduced by Br Sojin Immatty, CAP

Released by Rev Dr John Romus

First copy to Dr Mary DCruz

The Vote of Thanks was given by Fr Giges Thomas, who ensured the smooth conduction of the entire Convocation ceremony.

**REMEMBER TO RENEW  
YOUR SUBSCRIPTION  
TO  
THE HERALD**

## Most Revd. Dr. Paritosh Canning, Bishop of Calcutta is the 16th Moderator of the CNI



The Installation of the Most Revd. Dr. Paritosh Canning Bishop of Calcutta as the 16th Moderator of the Church of North India was held on 24.10.25 in St. Paul's Cathedral, Kolkata.

The Deputy Moderator, the Rt Revd. Sylvans S. Christian, Bishop of Gujarat, the Rt. Revd. Prabhu Bishop of Bombay, the Rt Revd. Manoj Charan Bishop of Amritsar, the Rt. Revd. Neena Charan Bishop of Bhopal, the Rt. Revd. Subrata Chakraborty, Bishop of Barrackpore, the Clergy of the Diocese and Barrackpore, Clergy and Representatives from the Roman Catholic Archdiocese, the Methodist Church of India, The Armenian, Salvation Army, Orthodox Church, Baptists, ALMA (Alumni of Institutions) Principals and Vice-Principals of various

institutions, Diocesan Executive Committee, DWFCS, DYFC, Sunday School Committee, Diocesan Council members and Pastorate Committee members were present.

In his message, the Moderator thanked the Diocese and all present for their love and service to God and the CNI. His message centred around the family of the Prodigal Son found in Luke 15:11-32. He said that this family which the younger son left and to which he returned is the ideal family of God. All the members of the family including the servants are well-cared for. The Bishop said that this is the family that the Church of North India has to grow into. His vision for the CNI is Growing in Christ. The Bishop is the second CNI Bishop of Calcutta to be elected as Moderator of the Church of North India.

The first Bishop to be elected as Moderator was the late Most Revd. Dr. Dinesh Chandra Gorai. Also from the time of Bishop Daniel Wilson in 1840 till Bishop Lakdasa De Mel in 1970 the

Bishops of Calcutta have always been the Metropolitans of the Anglican Church of CIPBC.

In the coming days this vision of Growing in Christ will become more clear. In the prayers the congregation prayed for wisdom, discernment, strength and perseverance for the Moderator as he proclaims the truth and directs the life, worship and mission of the CNI. The people also prayed for humble and willing hearts to stand alongside the Moderator with prayerful support and cooperation to serve God together to edify the Church and advance God's kingdom. The felicitation ceremony took place in the grounds of St. Paul's Cathedral. (CNNews)

## Midnapore Deanery Youth Jubilee Celebration



By Robert Prince Roy

The Youth Jubilee celebration took place on 20th October 2025 at St. Paul's Church, Kamarchowki, Midnapore Deanery, marking the Jubilee year. Fr. Ananda Halder welcomed everyone, including Fr. Stephen Tudu, Deanery Coordinator, and ZEXCO member Robert Prince. Fr. Stephen led a session on "Challenges faced by Youth in Midnapore Deanery," and Mr. Prince taught an action song, engaging the youth actively.

About 100 parishioners attended, including nearly 60 youth. Fr. Ananda Halder formed a youth group, electing president, vice president, secretary, joint secretary, treasurer, and joint treasurer, emphasizing their roles. The youth participated fully in the liturgy and choir. After Mass, lunch was served, followed by traditional dance, enjoyed by all. Parish Youth Animator Miss Juliana Soren expressed special thanks to Fr. Ananda Halder, Fr. Stephen Tudu, and all youth for their involvement.

# News & Views

## Ranchi Archdiocese to fight ‘Socio-Political Intolerance’ & ‘Minority Syndrome’



By Francis Sunil Rosario

Ranchi: The Archdiocese of Ranchi, under the leadership of Most Rev Vincent Aind, Archbishop of Ranchi conducted an innovative and inspiring brain storming session for the Christian Communities of Jharkhand Region. “Speak Up Ranchi” was a whole day session to awaken the Christian conscience to fight for the fundamental rights and towards taking some positive steps to build the societies and Nation at large. Sr Lalita Roshni DSA, on behalf of the Archdiocese introduced the session, “Speak up, Ranchi” The evening session began with a very reflective prayer by His Grace, Archbishop Vincent. The two veteran speakers were invited to inspire the audience with their erudite talks on the matters of concern. Mr. Derek O'Brien, a hard-core MP in Rajya Sabha and a long-time politician from Bengal (TMC) and Rev Fr Cedric Prakash, SJ, a prophetic voice in India to fight corruption, injustices and protecting the rights of minority communities specially the oppressed and the marginalised. Both the speakers at the evening session spoke powerfully, presenting data available on the contributions made by Christian communities all over India that has helped in Nation building plans and projects. There are over 54,000 educational institutions run by the Christian churches in India, the speakers said. A few Bishops of Jharkhand region came to participate in the brain storming session. Besides, this realistic and thought-provoking session was attended by over 300 participants across, mainly from the capital city, Ranchi, the Religious Congregations, the Clergy and the Laity. The representatives from various Denominations (CNI and others) were also present to strengthen the cause. Fr Cedric Prakash, a prolific writer, who is not afraid to challenge the leaders, including Bishops in the matters of justice, human rights and human dignity. He addressed the august gathering contextualizing the most recent documents by Late Pope Francis and Pope Leo XIV. In his message he drew the attention of recent encyclical by Pope Francis, 'Dilexit Nos' (He Loved us). He also spoke on the maiden Apostolic Exhortation by Pope Leo XIV, 'Dilexi Te' (I have Loved You) that focuses on Christ's love for the poor and the call for the Church to renew its commitment to those most in need. It is subtitled "on love for the poor". Mr. Derek Obrien, the most outspoken MP in the parliament, spoke on minority rights and human dignity. He presented the most recent statistics of Christian communities in South Asian countries. As of 2025, the Christian population in Asia is estimated to be approxi-

mately 298 million, which constitutes about 6.53% of the continent's total population. Christianity is a wide-spread minority religion in Asia, with the largest populations found in the following countries: Philippines: 102.32 million China: 72.41 million India: 33.8 million (2.3%) Indonesia: 26.93 million South Korea: 15 million Other Asian nations with significant Christian populations include Vietnam, Kazakhstan, Georgia, and Armenia. Christianity is the majority religion in countries such as the Philippines, East Timor, Armenia, Georgia, and Cyprus.

'Unity is strength'. Mr. Derek said, “It's high time that the various Denominations should come together ecumenically to fight injustices and oppressions inflicted on Christian communities by some fundamentalist forces in the country.” He also said that, the Christian communities should overcome the 'Minority syndrome' and act courageously living the Gospel values, with true sense of commitment and conviction of self-sacrificing love. He was very positive of Christian presence in Asian countries even though minority, their contributions have been immense. In his speech he emphasised that we Christians should overcome the “minority syndrome” and count more on the strength of Christian communities. Our contributions in the area of Education, Health care and Socio-economic development are well known to all. We should be proud of our contribution to the nation building. No doubt, the Christians in India, although a minority, 2.3% of 1.4 Billion population, their contributions in the areas of Education, Health care and Socio-economic Development in the most remote villages, serving the poorest of the poor are immense. Rev. Fr. Vishu Benjamin Aind - Vicar General, Khunti Diocese, also shared his views and the contribution of Christian communities in his diocese, in the area of Education, health care and Socio-economic development. During the session, some of the examples of missionaries who stood strong for the cause of humanity, to fight for Justice and peace were cited. The most recent case of Late Fr. Stan Sami, SJ, who initiated the cause of displaced people and migrant labourers at Bagaicha, Namkom, however falsely accused and became a martyr. While the Christian mission began in Jharkhand, formerly Chortanagpur, the Belgian missionaries were not afraid to reach out to most remote villages to evangelise and preach the good news. Late Fr. Constant Lievens S.J., Rev. Fr. Edward De Meulder, S.J, Fr. John Baptist Hoffman, S.J., Fr. A. Van Exem, S.J. and many others have planted the seeds of Christ in the most remote areas. Today the Church is showing signs in numerous vocations and their involvement in missionary endeavour beyond boundaries and across the globe. “Speak Up, Ranchi” session presented some motivational talks to build courage and confidence towards the cause of our human rights and preserving those rights and privileges by the virtue of being citizens of the country.

## A Pilgrimage of Faith and Grace: My Journey to Rome, October 2025



By Aishwarya Augustina Toppo

First and foremost, I offer my heartfelt gratitude to God, the Almighty, for blessing me with the incredible opportunity to participate in the Canonization of Sister Maria Troncatti, a member of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA), also known as the Salesian Sisters, on 19 October 2025. I would also like to express my sincere thanks to the Salesian Sisters of the Kolkata Province (FMA-INC) for graciously inviting me to be part of this momentous celebration. A special note of thanks goes to Sr. Leelamma Palliparambil FMA, the Provincial, with whom my elder brother, Abhishek Toppo, and I had the joy and privilege of traveling to and from Rome. From October 15th to 21st, 2025, I had the joy of visiting Rome during the Jubilee Year — a sacred time of forgiveness, renewal, and mercy that only comes once every 25 years. The Eternal City was alive in a way words can scarcely describe — pilgrims from all over the world walked its cobbled streets with prayer beads in hand, church bells rang with renewed fervour, and faith itself seemed to breathe through the air. Amid this sacred atmosphere, one of the most unforgettable moments of my journey was attending the canonization of Saint Maria Troncatti at St. Peter's Basilica on October 19th, presided over by Pope Leo XIV. Being part of such a historic event — witnessing a woman of deep faith and humility being officially declared a saint — was profoundly moving. The basilica was filled with joy, reverence, and a quiet, collective awe. I remember watching as the image of St. Maria was unveiled, the crowd erupting into applause, and tears welled up in my eyes. It wasn't just a ceremony; it was an encounter with living holiness. Saint Maria Troncatti's life left a deep impression on me. Born in Italy, she dedicated her life as a Salesian Sister to serving the poor, sick, and marginalized communities in the Amazon rainforest of Ecuador. Her courage in times of war, her compassion for the wounded, and her unwavering faith in the face of adversity reminded me that true greatness often lies in quiet sacrifice. She didn't seek recognition — she simply loved, healed, and served. Her story inspired me to look at my own life and ask: How can I bring a little more kindness and light into the world around me? Walking through the Holy Doors during the Jubilee was another powerful moment — a symbolic passage representing mercy, forgiveness, and spiritual renewal. Each step felt like a prayer of surrender and gratitude. Visiting the four major basilicas — St. John Lateran, St. Paul Outside the Walls, St. Mary Major, and St. Peter's — gave me moments of deep reflection. Standing before the relics of saints, gazing up at centuries-old frescoes, and feeling the weight of faith embedded in every stone — it all reminded me that the Church's beauty isn't only in its art and architecture, but in its enduring spirit of hope and love. Rome itself felt like a sacred classroom — every church, every sculpture, every ancient ruin had something to teach about perseverance, devotion, and the passage of time. Whether it was sharing smiles with fellow pilgrims, lighting candles for loved ones, or simply sitting in quiet prayer at the Vatican Gardens, each moment carried grace. As I returned home, my heart was full — not just of memories, but of renewed purpose. Saint Maria Troncatti's life continues to inspire me to live with humility, serve selflessly, and find holiness in the everyday. This journey wasn't just travel; it was transformation — a reminder that faith, when lived with love, can truly change the world, one act of kindness at a time. (Aishwarya Augustina Toppo is the Founder & CEO of Madonna's Sustainable Decors).

## Perspective

### Vatican nixes use of 'Co-Redemptrix,' 'Mediatrix' as titles for Mary



By Hannah Brockhaus

The Vatican's doctrinal office said Tuesday the titles of "Co-Redemptrix" and "Mediatrix" are not appropriate ways to describe Mary's participation in salvation.

In *Mater Populi Fidelis* ("The Mother of the Faithful People of God"), the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF) said when an expression requires frequent explanation to maintain the correct meaning, it becomes unhelpful. "In this case, the expression 'co-redemptrix' does not help extol Mary as the first and foremost collaborator in the work of redemption and grace, for it carries the risk of eclipsing the exclusive role of Jesus Christ," according to the doctrinal note, released Nov. 4.

Pope Leo XIV approved the document, signed by DDF prefect Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, on Oct. 7.

Mary's contribution to human salvation, specifically the title of "Co-Redemptrix" ("Co-Redeemer"), has been a point of theological debate for decades, with proponents calling for Mary's role in redemption to be declared a dogma but critics saying it exaggerates her importance and could damage efforts for unity with other Christian denominations.

In a preface to the note, Fernández wrote that the document responds to questions the dicastery received in recent decades about Marian devotion and certain Marian titles, and clarifies which are acceptable.

"There are some Marian reflection groups, publications, new devotions, and even requests for Marian dogmas that do not share the same characteristics as popular devotion," the cardinal wrote, adding that some Marian devotions, expressed "intensely through social media," can sow confusion among Catholics.

"This text also aims to deepen the proper foundations of Marian devotion by specifying Mary's place in her relationship with believers in light of the mystery of Christ as the sole mediator and redeemer. This entails a profound fidelity to Catholic identity while also requiring a particular ecumenical

effort," Fernández wrote.

In addition to "Co-Redemptrix," the document also addressed at length the Marian title "Mediatrix" or "Mediatrix of All Graces," analyzing related Church teaching on Mary's role as intercessor.

The DDF concluded that "some titles, such as 'Mediatrix of All Graces,' have limits that do not favour a correct understanding of Mary's unique place." The dicastery encouraged the use of other expressions for Mary, specifically titles referring to her motherhood, including "Mother of God" and "Mother of the Faithful People of God."

"She is the mother who gave the world the author of redemption and of grace, who stood firm at the foot of the cross (cf. John 19:25), suffering alongside her son and offering the pain of her maternal heart pierced by the sword (cf. Luke 2:35)," the document said. "From the Incarnation to the cross and the Resurrection, she was united to Christ in a way that is unique and that far surpasses any other believer."

Emphasizing that Mary was saved by her son, Jesus Christ, "in a particular and anticipatory way," the document explained that "Mary's incomparable greatness lies in what she has received and in her trusting readiness to allow herself to be overtaken by the Spirit."

It warned that "when we strive to attribute active roles to her that are parallel to those of Christ, we move away from the incomparable beauty that is uniquely hers."

#### Presentation in Rome

Experts on Mariology have held different positions on the title "Co-Redemptrix," as have different popes.

At a presentation at the Jesuit Curia in Rome on Nov. 4, Fernández emphasized Pope Leo XIV's support for the doctrinal note but said "there is no doubt that this document will not please some people." He explained that note was intended to help Catholics avoid either exaggerating or underrating the importance of devotion to Mary.

"We care for the people's faith without complicating it with issues that are not among the concerns of the vast majority and that add nothing essential to their love for Mary," he added.

### How do India's 'Freedom of Religion' laws violate the constitution?

True religious freedom lies in safeguarding individual choice, not restricting it

By Dominic Savio Fernandes

India takes pride in being the world's largest democracy, upholding its secular credentials and guaranteeing every citizen the right to religious freedom.

The founding fathers of the Indian Constitution, aware of India's diversity, included in Article 25 the fundamental right to "profess, practice, and propagate" one's religion freely according to one's conscience, subject only to public order, morality, and health.

Article 19(1) (a) protects freedom of speech and expression, including the right to share one's beliefs, while Article 21 safeguards the right to life and personal liberty, which includes the freedom to choose or reject one's own belief system. Together, these provisions support an individual's right to freely follow their conscience.

Yet, in stark contrast to this constitutional vision, 12 of India's 28 states have enacted "Freedom of Religion Acts," which are actually laws that deny people the moral obligation and the fundamental right to follow their God-given conscience.

The government of Maharashtra, where my own archdiocese is based in the state capital Mumbai (formerly Bombay), is planning a Freedom of Religion Bill to become the 13th state with such a law. Far from protecting freedom, it threatens to suppress the very spirit of compassion at the core of our society.

These laws, which criminalize conversion through fraud, coercion, and allurement, have been weaponized by right-wing groups to target Christians and other minorities. The tragedy is that any Christian mission activity, including a prayer gathering, could be construed as fraud, coercion, and allurement for conversion.

These so-called "Freedom of Religion Acts" should actually be called "anti-forced-conversion acts." Although they claim to protect religious freedom and prevent forced conversions, they have instead become tools for harassment, particularly targeting religious minorities like Christians.

The term "Freedom of Religion law" is a misnomer. Instead of safeguarding an individual's right to convert to any religion they choose freely, these laws place restrictions on conversion itself.

They invert the logic of liberty: instead of protecting freedom, they assume guilt. Once someone is arrested, the burden of proof shifts to the accused — not the complainant — who must demonstrate their innocence. This reverses the principle of justice, turning the law from a shield into a weapon — wielded by fundamentalists to target religious minorities.

There have been reports, in various media outlets, of widespread misuse of these "anti-conversion" laws in many states across India, where Christians are accused of violating the law despite little or no evidence of forced conversions. As a result, families have been torn apart by false complaints, and pastors and lay Christians have been jailed solely on suspicion.

Across Maharashtra, Catholic religious



institutions and charitable organizations have, for decades, reached out to the most marginalized sections of society by providing food to the hungry, shelter to the destitute, education to the underprivileged, and medical care to those who cannot afford it.

The planned law in Maharashtra will have a chilling effect on these humanitarian efforts of the Catholic Church and other faith-based groups. These acts are inspired by one's faith and never imposed upon others, and the beneficiaries come from all backgrounds, irrespective of caste, creed, or religion.

The right-wing elements, rather than contributing to the common good, seek to criminalize compassion by making false allegations of "forced conversions" even when no such acts exist.

False allegations of forced conversion become vendetta tools, in the hands of such unscrupulous elements, turning humanitarian outreach into a prosecutable offense. As Church leaders in Maharashtra have warned, this bill will "stifle the Church's social apostolate," leaving the vulnerable doubly abandoned.

Such misuse of the law will have a terrorizing effect on charitable religious institutions and organizations and will discourage them from carrying out their apostolate, for fear of persecution, harassment, or imprisonment. The ultimate sufferers will be the poor, those who depend on these voluntary institutions for basic human needs.

It must be remembered that the Catholic Church itself rejects the very idea of forced conversion; such conversions are deemed invalid. True conversion, in the Christian understanding, is a free and conscious act of faith, never achieved through coercion or inducement.

There already exist ample laws in India to deal with cases of coercion or fraud. India does not need draconian laws that can be abused to suppress service, compassion, and fraternity.

If India is to remain faithful to its secular and democratic ideals, the misuse of the "Freedom of Religion Act" must be addressed urgently.

True religious freedom lies in safeguarding individual choice, not restricting it. The essence of Indian democracy is that every Indian, regardless of one's religious affiliation, has the right to follow one's conscience without fear of reprisal. Until the "Freedom of Religion Act" is reformed or repealed, this freedom remains under grave threat.

Let compassion, not suspicion, guide our laws.

## Focus

Part-23

## Great Thinkers Who Shaped History

## John Dewey

October 20, 1859 - June 1, 1952 (aged 92)

By Francis Sunil Rosario

**The role of teacher education to cultivate the professional classroom teacher**

Dewey's passions for teaching—a natural love for working with young children, a natural propensity to inquire about the subjects, methods and other social issues related to the profession, and a desire to share this acquired knowledge with others—are not a set of outwardly displayed mechanical skills. Rather, they may be viewed as internalized principles or habits which "work automatically, unconsciously" (Dewey, 1904, p. 15). According to Dewey, teacher-education programs must turn away from focusing on producing proficient practitioners because such practical skills related to instruction and discipline (e.g., creating and delivering lesson plans, classroom management, implementation of an assortment of content-specific methods) can be learned over time during their everyday schoolwork with their students (Dewey, PST, 2010).

As Dewey notes, "The teacher who leaves the professional school with power in managing a class of children may appear to superior advantage the first day, the first week, the first month, or even the first year, as compared with some other teacher who has a much more vital command of the psychology, logic and ethics of development. But later 'progress' may consist only in perfecting and refining skill already possessed. Such persons seem to know how to teach, but they are not students of teaching. Even though they go on studying books of pedagogy, reading teachers' journals, attending teachers' institutes, etc., yet the root of the matter is not in them, unless they continue to be students of subject-matter, and students of mind-activity. Unless a teacher is such a student, he may continue to improve in the mechanics of school management, but he cannot grow as a teacher, an inspirer and director of soul-life" (Dewey, 1904, p. 15).

For Dewey, teacher education should focus not on producing persons who know how to teach as soon as they leave the program; rather, teacher education should be concerned with producing professional students of education who have the propensity to inquire about the subjects they teach, the methods used, and the activity of the mind as it gives and receives knowledge. According to Dewey, such a student is not superficially engaging with these materials, rather, the professional student of education has a genuine passion to inquire about the subjects of education, knowing that doing so ultimately leads to acquisitions of the skills related to teaching. Such students of education aspire for the intellectual growth within the profession that can only be achieved by immersing oneself in the lifelong pursuit of the intelligence, skills and character Dewey linked to the profession. As Dewey notes, other professional fields, such as law and medicine cultivate a professional spirit in their fields to constantly study their work, their methods of their work, and a perpetual need for intellectual growth and concern for issues related to their profession. Teacher education, as a profession, has these same obligations (Dewey,



1904; Dewey, PST, 2010).

As Dewey notes, "An intellectual responsibility has got to be distributed to every human being who is concerned in carrying out the work in question, and to attempt to concentrate intellectual responsibility for a work that has to be done, with their brains and their hearts, by hundreds or thousands of people in a dozen or so at the top, no matter how wise and skilful they are, is not to concentrate responsibility, it is to diffuse irresponsibility" (Dewey, PST, 2010, p. 39). For Dewey, the professional spirit of teacher education requires of its students a constant study of school room work, constant study of children, of methods, of subject matter in its various adaptations to pupils. Such study will lead to professional enlightenment with regard to the daily operations of classroom teaching.

Dewey's qualifications for teaching—a natural love for working with young children, a natural propensity to inquire about the subjects, methods and other social issues related to the profession, and a desire to share this acquired knowledge with others—are not a set of outwardly displayed mechanical skills. Rather, they may be viewed as internalized principles or habits which "work automatically, unconsciously" (Dewey, 1904, p. 15). Turning to Dewey's essays and public addresses regarding the teaching profession, followed by his analysis of the teacher as a person and a professional, as well as his beliefs regarding the responsibilities of teacher education programs to cultivate the attributes addressed, teacher educators can begin to reimagine the successful classroom teacher Dewey envisioned.

**Teacher's Knowledge**

Dewey believed that successful classroom teacher possesses a passion for knowledge and intellectual curiosity in the materials and methods they teach. For Dewey, this propensity is an inherent curiosity and love for learning that differs from one's ability to acquire, recite and reproduce textbook knowledge. "No one," according to Dewey, "can be really successful in performing the duties and meeting these demands of teaching who does not retain their intellectual curiosity intact throughout their entire career" (Dewey, APT, 2010, p. 34).

**St. Maria Troncatti: Mother, Missionary, Artisan of Peace and Reconciliation**

By Sr. Shanti Tirkey FMA

In the lush green heart of Ecuador's Amazon rainforest, where rivers carve paths through dense jungle and the air hums with life, a humble Italian nun once became a living symbol of faith, courage, and compassion. She is none other than St. Maria Troncatti, a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians.

Born on February 16, 1883, in the small mountain town of Corteno Golgi in northern Italy, Maria grew up in a family that prized simplicity, hard work, and faith. Even as a child, she felt a burning call to serve others. She joined the Salesian Sisters, and by 1908 she professed her vows as a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians (FMA). But God's plan for her extended far beyond the quiet convent walls of Italy.

During World War I, Sister Maria served as a nurse with the Italian Red Cross. In the chaos of the war hospitals, she learned not only medicine but also mercy — the kind that heals both body and soul. Those years prepared her for a mission she could not have imagined: a call to the Amazon rainforest of Ecuador.

In 1922, Sister Maria embarked on a journey that would define her life. Arriving in the remote jungle among the Shuar people, she encountered a world entirely different from her own. Language, customs, and climate all posed immense challenges.

Yet through patience, service, and love, she built bridges where none existed. To the Shuar, she became "La Madrecita" — the little mother.

Armed with little more than a crucifix, a stethoscope, and an unshakable faith, she became a nurse, surgeon, dentist, anaesthetist, teacher, and friend. She treated wounds, delivered babies, extracted teeth, and taught the Gospel — often in the same day. Her medical care was accompanied by profound respect for the culture and dignity of the Shuar people. Rather than impose, she listened. Rather than dominate, she uplifted.

There are stories told of how she saved a tribal chief's daughter, earning the trust of an entire community. From that moment on, the jungle no longer saw her as a stranger but as family. Through her tireless work, she

helped to open schools, provide health care, and teach Christian values rooted in mutual respect and love.

Tragically, Sister Maria's earthly journey ended on August 25, 1969, in a plane crash near Sucúa, Ecuador. But her spirit — as vibrant as the forest she served — continues to inspire generations of missionaries, nurses, and people of faith.

On November 24, 2012, she was beatified by Pope Benedict XVI for her heroic virtue. And on October 19, 2025 she was canonized by Pope Leo XIV. It was the privileged moment for our Provincial Sr. Leelamma Palliparambil together with two young people of St. Patrick's Church, Dum Dum Abhishek Toppo and Aishwarya Toppo and the other Indians from different parts of our country who took part in the canonization ceremony.

I would like to mention about the great miracle that led Blessed Maria Troncatti to canonization.

According to an article in L'Osservatore Romano, it involved a Shuar man named Juwa Juank Kankua Bosco who in 2015 suffered catastrophic head trauma when a large stone hit his skull, resulting in massive brain injury, coma or vegetative state. He reportedly dreamed of Maria Troncatti in which she told him he would be healed. Shortly after his dream, his recovery began; eventually he regained speech, mobility and returned to full health. It was the proud moment as the Shuar man, Juwa Kankua Bosco and his family members were present for the canonization of Blessed Maria Troncatti.

Maria Troncatti's life calls each of us to embrace the same burning spirit that guided her every step: "I must be a missionary — always, everywhere, and with all my heart." She stands as a luminous beacon of faith that heals, serves, and unites — a woman whose love transformed the untamed Amazon into a living cathedral of compassion. Through her tireless devotion, she showed that true holiness is not found in grand gestures, but in the quiet, steadfast gift of oneself to others, day after day, heart to heart. Through her intercession let us pray for the healing of our brothers and sisters those who are affected by various diseases.

Praying with The Bible in the Jubilee Year

Praying with The Bible: Part-33  
Ignatian Meditations-cum-study on The Song of Songs



By Sacaria Joseph, SJ

The Narrative of the Song of Songs 2

§ **The Maiden:** “I am but a simple rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys,” a common flower in my humble world.

§ **The King:** “Like a lily among thorns is my darling among the young women.” To me, she is not common at all; she stands out, radiant and unmatched by any other.

§ **The Maiden:** “My Beloved is like an apple tree among the trees of the forest” (3), a source of life and beauty. She delights to rest in his shade, finding his presence sweeter than fruit. “Let him bring me to his banquet hall, where his banner over me is love” (4). Faint with longing, she asks to be strengthened with raisins and refreshed with apples (5). She finds rest and comfort in his arms, his left arm under her head, his right embracing her (6).

§ **The King:** He pleads to the daughters of Jerusalem: “Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires” (7).

§ **The Approach of the Sheperd Lover: Suddenly, the silence breaks:** “Listen! My beloved! Look! Here he comes, leaping across the mountains, bounding over the hills” (8–9), swift as a gazelle. “He stands outside our wall, gazing through the windows, peering through the lattice” (9).

§ **The Sheperd Lover:** “Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, come with me” (10). “The winter is past; the rains are over. The flowers appear, and the season of singing has come” (11–12). Early figs ripen, and blossoming vines spread their fragrance. “Arise, come, my darling; my beautiful one, come with me” (13).

§ **Sheperd Lover:** “My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hiding places on the mountainside, show me your face, let me hear your voice” (14). Her voice is sweet, her face lovely. Yet he warns, “Catch for us the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, our vineyards that are in bloom” (15).

§ **The Maiden:** She declares with joy, “My beloved is mine and I am his” (16). As night lingers, she yearns for him: “Until the day breaks and the shadows flee, turn, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the rugged hills” (17).

Meditation 2

On the Season of Rising and Love

I. Preparation

**A) Meditation Posture:** Sit quietly in a peaceful place. Keep your back upright but relaxed, allowing your body to be at ease while remaining alert. Prepare yourself to encounter God in prayer and to listen with your whole being. Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths, letting your thoughts gently drift away as you bring your attention inward to the stillness of your heart.

**B) Preparatory Prayer:** Ask God for the grace that you may direct all your desires, thoughts, and actions to the praise and service of His Divine Majesty.

**C) First Prelude (Composition of Place):** Imagine a fertile spring valley, where wild lilies and roses bloom and the air is rich with the scent of figs, vines, and fresh rain. In the distance, a shepherd approaches the home of his beloved, swift as a gazelle, leaping over hills. He waits by a lattice window. Her heart races as she hears his call, inviting her to the open fields where the season of singing has begun.

**D) Second Prelude (Seeking a Special Grace):** Lord, grant me the grace to truly hear Your call to rise. Help me leave behind the hiding places of fear and hesitation, so I can step into the new season of life and love You are preparing for me.

II. Meditation

**A) Reading:** Read Song of Songs 2 slowly, listening with the 'ear of your heart.' As you read, let the images become real to you. Feel the warmth of the sun, hear the birdsong, and sense the presence of the one who is speaking. Notice how the voices change and what feelings they stir within you.

**B) Reflection: Reflect on the biblical narrative along the following lines:**

§ **Beauty in the Ordinary (1-2):** The maiden calls herself the “rose of Sharon” and the “lily of the valleys,” simple flowers reflecting modesty. King Solomon, however, sees her as “a lily among thorns,” a rare and radiant beauty.

How do you see yourself? How do those closest to you see you? How does God see you? Do you believe He recognises beauty and worth in you, even when you feel unadorned or overlooked? Where has He set you apart for His joy and delight? § **Rest and Sustenance (3–6):** The maiden finds rest and delight in the shade of her beloved. His love is a banner of belonging, and in his embrace, she finds comfort and strength.

In the busyness of life, where do you find rest? Do you seek refuge in the arms of God, or rely on your own strength? The love of the beloved is not a cage but a sanctuary. Do you trust His embrace?

§ **The Warning of the King (7):** The king warns, “Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires.” True love matures in its own time. Where in your spiritual journey are you impatient? Are you rushing ahead of the timing of God? Where is He asking you to wait, trust, and let His work unfold in its perfect season?

§ **The Invitation of the Beloved (8–14):** The beloved comes like a gazelle, leaping over mountains, and calls, “Arise, my darling ... come with me,” pointing to the signs of a new season: winter has passed, flowers bloom, and rains are gone. He calls His maiden His “dove in the clefts of the rock,” inviting her to show her face and let Him hear her voice.

Can you hear this as a personal invitation from Christ? Which “winters” in your life — past hurts, old habits, or seasons of waiting — are over? What new “springs” is He inviting you into? Are there reasons of fear, shame, or self-preservation that cause you to tend to hide from God? He comes not to judge but to behold you with love. Are you willing to leave the familiar behind, step into the light, and let Him see all of you?

§ **Guarding the Vineyard (15):** The Beloved warns of the “little foxes that ruin the vineyards.” Small compromises and neglected habits can spoil the fruits of love. 1

What are the “little foxes” in your soul — resentments, distractions, or seeds of self-pity? How can you cooperate with God to keep your inner life fruitful and full of love?

§ **Mutual Belonging (16-17):** The maiden declares, “My beloved is mine and I am his,” expressing a secure, covenantal love. Do you live aware that you belong to God and He to you? In the waiting — “until the day breaks” — are you willing to hold hope, trusting in the promise of His return?

**C) Colloquy:** Speak to Jesus as a friend. Share the “winters” you are leaving behind, the “springs” you long to enter, the hiding places you cling to, and the foxes you need to guard against. Thank Him for the shade of His love and the joy of His call. Ask for courage to rise when you hear His voice and to run with Him into the fields of new beginnings.

**D) Contemplation:** Rest in the image of His embrace, under His banner of love. Let the fragrance of spring, the sound of doves, and the warmth of His nearness fill your senses. Without words, simply dwell in the assurance that you are seen, known, and loved.

III. Conclusion

**A) Expressing Gratitude:** Conclude the meditation by thanking the Triune God for the graces received during this time of prayer, as if thanking a close friend for a meaningful conversation.

**B) Returning to the Present:** Gently shift your posture and take a few deep breaths. Feel the ground beneath you and the air on your skin. Open your eyes slowly, bringing the peace of your prayer into the rest of your day.

**C) Reviewing the Experience:** Before you move on, take a moment to reflect on what you experienced. What did you learn? What was most striking? Carry this reflection with you, allowing it to shape your steps.

Miscellaneous



St. Ezequiel Moreno: Hope for those facing cancer

**By Daniel Esparza**

It was after his death that the first reports of healing through his intercession began to spread, particularly among cancer patients.

In a quiet convent in Monteagudo, Spain, St. Ezequiel Moreno breathed his last on August 19, 1906. The pain that ended his life — cancer — would later become the very reason many turn to him for comfort and healing. A missionary, bishop, and spiritual father, he is now venerated as a patron saint of those who suffer from cancer, a title born from his own suffering and his intercession in the lives of others.

Ezequiel Moreno was born in 1848 in Alfaro, a small town in Spain's Rioja region. At 17, he joined the Augustinian Recollects in Monteagudo, embracing a life of prayer, simplicity, and missionary zeal.

Sent to the Philippines in 1871, he spent 15 years bringing the Gospel to remote communities, tending both to their faith and their illnesses. Later, he journeyed to Colombia, where he worked tirelessly to rebuild the Order's missions and was eventually appointed Bishop of Pasto.

Those who knew him spoke of his tireless compassion. He visited the sick, comforted the poor, and never hesitated to speak of the hope found in Christ. Even as cancer consumed his body, he bore his illness with peace, seeing his suffering as a form of union with Christ's own.

"Pain can be a school of love," he once said to a friend, "when it is offered with faith."

It was after his death that the first reports of healing through his intercession began to spread, particularly among cancer patients. The most extraordinary of these

stories came from Colombia, where a woman named María Jesús Nández was healed of terminal breast cancer after praying to him in 1986. Doctors could not explain her recovery. Years later, the Church would recognize her healing as the miracle that confirmed his canonization by Saint John Paul II in 1992.

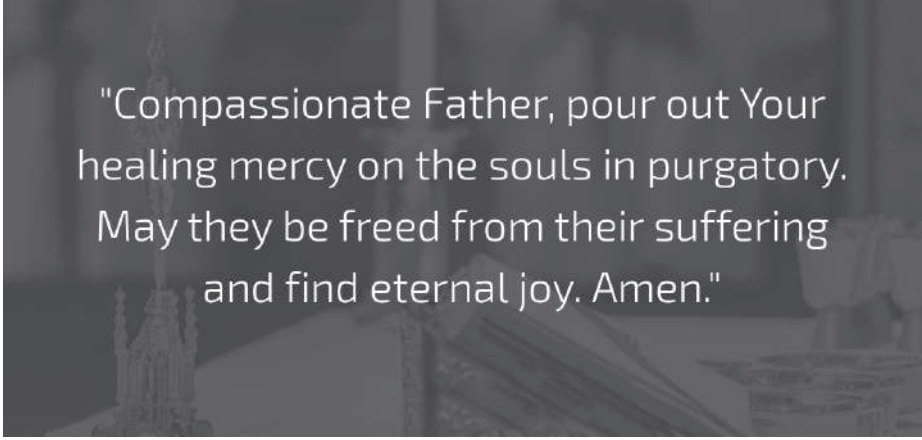
Today, his legacy continues in places like the Fundación San Ezequiel Moreno (FUSEM) in Colombia, supported by ARCORES, the Augustinian Recollect Solidarity Network. The foundation provides food, medicine, and spiritual care to cancer patients and their families — embodying the saint's spirit of compassion in tangible form.

St. Ezequiel's example resonates deeply in a world where cancer remains a daily cross for millions. His life reminds us that holiness is not lived apart from suffering but often through it. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches, "By his passion and death on the cross, Christ has given a new meaning to suffering: it can henceforth configure us to him and unite us with his redemptive Passion" (CCC 1505).

On his feast day, August 19, the Church prays:

"Father, we thank You for giving us Saint Ezequiel Moreno, a model of fidelity to the Gospel and a shepherd after Your own heart. Through his intercession, may we live with joy our Christian witness and serve You and one another with generous love."

For those walking the difficult road of illness, St. Ezequiel remains a companion of courage — a reminder that even in the face of pain, faith can kindle healing, hope, and the quiet triumph of love.



Feeling sad, lonely, perplexed? The new Doctor of the Church can help



**By Sarah Robsdottir**

John Henry Newman's "Mission Prayer" is so much more than a prayer; it's a chin-lifting, life-giving, 30-second benediction.

Years ago, I was going through a particularly dark season, feeling unmoored by a variety of painful situations, when a priest shared St. John Henry Newman's "Mission Prayer" with me. Its message immediately made me stand up a little straighter, lifting my chin and my gaze heavenward.

At the same time, the prayer was a powerful homily in a nutshell, reaffirming my vocation here on earth and inspiring me to more joyfully accomplish my often wearisome daily duties, such as caring for young children, doing laundry, and washing dishes.

Almost a decade later, every time I say the "Mission Prayer," it has the same bolstering effect. I always wind up feeling more secure, reaffirmed, and better able to focus on my vocation.

So you can imagine my excitement at the recent Vatican announcement that St. John Henry Newman, the beloved 19th-century Anglican convert and priest, will be named the 38th Doctor of the Church on November 1, the Solemnity of All Saints.

That's probably why I've been meditating on the "Mission Prayer" from Newman's classic book *Meditations and Devotions* so much lately.

**The Mission Prayer by St. John Henry Newman**

God knows me and calls me by my name....

He has created me to do some definite service;

He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another.

I have my mission—I never may know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next.

Somehow, I am necessary for His purposes...

I have a part in this great work; I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection, between persons.

He has not created me for naught.

I shall do good, I shall do His work; I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth,

in my own place, while not intending it, if I do but keep His commandments.

and serve Him in my calling.

Therefore I will trust Him.

Whatever, wherever I am, I can never be thrown away.

If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him;

In perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him;

If I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him.

My sickness, or perplexity, or sorrow may be necessary causes of some great end, which is quite beyond us.

He does nothing in vain; He may prolong my life,

He may shorten it;

He knows what He is about.

He may take away my friends,

He may throw me among strangers,

He may make me feel desolate,

make my spirits sink, hide the future from me—

still He knows what He is about....

Let me be Thy blind instrument. I ask not to see—

I ask not to know—I ask simply to be used.

**Turning a mindset around**

It has been especially helpful to repeat snippets of this prayer throughout the day whenever I'm facing a hardship or struggling with a dark mood.

I'll say "He does nothing in vain" again and again when I'm tempted to doubt. In such moments, I'll also mutter, "I will trust him" and "he knows what he's about."

If I'm sick, I'll repeat like a broken record, "May my sickness serve him, may my sickness serve him, may my sickness serve him ...."

These tiny aspirations (also known as arrow prayers, or as I like to think of them, "popcorn prayers") have great power to turn a depressive mindset around.

While I repeat these snippets, the entire prayer's striking imagery of a person being a "link in a great chain of faith, an angel of peace and a preacher of truth without intending it, if I do but keep his commandments" stays in my mind and suddenly the mundane task before me - such as folding socks or cooking blue box mac and cheese for the millionth time - doesn't feel so mundane anymore.

## The Historic Merger of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (IBVM) And the Congregation of Jesus (CJ)

Continued from P1

In 1703, Pope Clement XI granted approbation of the Eighty-one Rules, based on the rules and constitutions of the Society of Jesus. These rules, together with the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, maintained the original inspiration of Mary Ward for her Institute.

In 1877, Pope Pius IX confirmed the Institute in the decree Religiosae Mulieres Congregationis.

The Irish branch, Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, was established by Teresa Ball in Dublin in 1821. She received her formation in the Bar Convent in York.

Together with the Ignatian heritage of the Spiritual Exercises and the Eighty-one Rules, Teresa Ball brought the Constitutions, based on those of St. Ignatius, from York to Rathfarnham. These Constitutions, with some revisions, had been observed in the oldest house of the Institute since the seventeenth century.

The Irish branch grew rapidly and was characterised from the beginning by a strong missionary urge. India was the first foundation after Rathfarnham in 1841, followed by Mauritius in 1845, Gibraltar in 1845, Canada in 1847, England in 1851, Australia in 1875, South Africa in 1878, the United States in 1880, Spain in 1888, Kenya in 1921, and Peru in 1981. As it grew, the Institute adapted and changed in response to political, social, and ecclesiological forces.

While the two Mary Ward congregations were separate, there was always informal contact between the two groups, and a desire for union grew. In 2019, following a communal discernment, both congregation leaders and their teams shared that they had been "unanimously confirmed in our belief that the two branches are being called to take the final step in returning to Mary Ward's original desire to found one congregation" In 2020, as COVID-19 continued throughout the world, the leadership teams shared a reflection, acknowledging that prayer and discernment for the proposed union continued throughout both congregations. In September of that year, a formal union process for both branches was launched. Against the backdrop of the pandemic, a creative way of encouraging members to get to know each other began. Ambassadors were appointed, and they provided digital spaces for sharing history, life, and mission. They were assisted by Animators from both general leadership teams. It was envisaged that the initiative would continue until June 2021. Both congregations were divided into four areas, and many joyous encounters took place on Zoom.

As the world continued to be affected by COVID-19, members were very much engaged in reflection and prayer about the merger. Prayer cards were printed, translated, and distributed to all provinces and regions.

On April 11, 2022, the IBVM Institute Leadership team shared that they had received a very clear mandate from all members to proceed to ask for a canonical merger with the Congregation of Jesus. On August 25, 2022, all delegates at the CJ General Congregation in Nemi voted unanimously to receive the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary into the Congregation of Jesus. On October 14, 2022, at the IBVM General Congregation in Manresa, there was a unanimous yes to the proposed merger with the Congregation of Jesus.

From January 2023 until the canonical vote by IBVM members on July 31, 2025, there were many joint CJ and IBVM meetings and gatherings. Sisters of both congregations worldwide engaged in the Spiritual Journey process from January to July 2025. For IBVM members, July 31, 2025, was a day of celebration and joy. On August 8, 2025, the news that IBVM had voted in favour of the merger with the Congregation of Jesus was received with deep gratitude. All now look forward to the proclamation of the official merger decree on November 4, 2025.

### Our Foundress, the Venerable Mary Ward

Born into a Yorkshire Catholic recusant family in 1585, Mary Ward felt called to religious life from a young age and joined a community of Poor Clare sisters in Flanders. However, she found the contemplative, enclosed life unsatisfying.

Inspired by a different calling, Mary returned to England and gathered a group of companions. In 1609 she founded a new type of religious community. In 1611, while praying, she heard clearly the words: "Take the same of the Society," by which she understood the "Society of Jesus" founded by St. Ignatius of Loyola. Her vision was for women to engage in active apostolic missions, similar to the Jesuits, but without the strict enclosure of traditional convents.

She opened her first school for girls in St. Omer, focussing on education and caring for the sick and imprisoned. This innovative model, which allowed women to be mobile and active in the community, met significant opposition from Church authorities. Her order was initially suppressed, and she was branded a heretic and briefly imprisoned.

The Pope's recognition of the Order's rules in 1703 was an important step towards confirming and honouring the commitment of the CJ sisters to the education of young women.

In 2009, Pope Benedict XVI proclaimed Mary Ward "Venerable." She was recognized as a woman of "undoubted heroic virtue." Mary Ward's sisters, both CJ and IBVM, who work in over 40 countries worldwide, rejoiced in the public recognition of this prophetic woman. As apostolic women religious, they continue to honour her charism through many apostolic endeavours.

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### POWERFUL PRAYER TO ST. JUDE

Most holy Apostle, Saint Jude Thaddeus, faithful servant and friend of Jesus, I place myself in your care at this difficult time. Help me know that I need not face my troubles alone. Please join me in my need, asking God to send me: consolation in my sorrow, courage in my fear, and healing amid my suffering. Ask our loving Lord to fill me with the grace to accept whatever may lie ahead for me and my loved ones, and to strengthen my faith in God's healing powers. Thank you, Saint Jude Thaddeus, for the promise of hope you hold out to all who believe, and inspire me to give this gift of hope to others as it has been given to me. Amen.

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